

An Evaluation of Studies on Mongolian History in Türkiye

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Studies on Mongolian history in Türkiye started in the 19th century as a part of Turkish history studies with modern methods. Historical texts prior to this period were mainly case reports and sometimes narrative in style. These texts gave very little reference to the Mongols and mentioned them in so far as they were relevant to the history of the formation of the Turkish presence in Türkiye. On the other hand, in the Seljuk and Ottoman sources, there were mentions of the Mongols and Genghis Khan, albeit in a sentence. As interest in the general history of the Turks increased, the history of the Mongols began to be researched. Especially since the beginning of the 20th century, the Mongols and Genghis Khan were mostly considered Turks. With the influence of the idea of Turkism, articles were written giving information about Mongolian history. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Mongols were also included in historical studies and ideas. Except for a few studies, studies that are the product of modern historiography and that analyze Mongolian history away from ideological concerns began to be seen mainly from the beginning of the 1940s. Until today, a significant accumulation has been achieved in studies on Mongolian history, especially in terms of Ilkhanid history in Türkiye.

During the Ottoman Empire, historical records were kept, and many works on history were written. However, it is very difficult to obtain compact information about the Mongols in these works. The understanding of history at that time was within the framework of classical Islamic history. These texts did not contain much information about the ancient history of the Turks and Mongols.

Firstly, early modern Turkish historians equated Turks and Mongols; they emphasized the unity of history and culture. According to them, Turks and Mongols are not separate races in terms of ethnography; they are of the same gender; they spread between Iranian and Chinese lands and created great civilizations; Genghis Khan was a historical figure that unites all Turks. The authors, who were against the Ottoman-centered understanding of history, evaluated the Mongols as a branch of the Turkish race and said that Genghis Khan was not a Mongol but a Turk. According to them, the empire of Genghis was the "Turkish-Mongol

Empire". Genghis, who united the Turks in the east, tried to gather the ones in the west under the roof of a single state.

Genghis Khan is also mentioned among the founders of *Turan* in the first years of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923. At that time, great importance was given to the Mongols.

It can be said that a new era has begun in Mongolian studies in Türkiye since the early 1940s. It has entered a period in which research on Mongolian history is written in more scholarly ways, based on main sources, without considering ideological motives and avoiding romantic interpretations.

In the 1940s, some ideas were shaped according to the first research. Accordingly, the Mongol Empire, founded by Genghis Khan, is accepted unanimously as the most important turning point in Mongolian history. The Mongols established a great state based on the nomadic traditions of the Huns, Xianbei, Tabgach, Rouran (Juan-juan), Turks, and Uighurs. The Mongol Empire caused great transformations in world history as well as in Turkic history. Prior to this, Mongolian tribes and political structures, especially the presence of Mongols in various states, especially those established by the Turks, were very important.

Secondly, Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire were among the first subjects of interest to modern Turkish historiography, which began in the 19th century. Early Turkish nationalists and romantic historians regarded the Mongols as one with the Turks, and Genghis as a Turkic khan. These views were voiced or contested on various occasions until the 1930s, but from the 1940s onward, there were very few researchers who persisted in relying on the main sources and modern historical methods.

Thirdly, many studies have been carried out in China and in the world on the Yuan Dynasty period that the Mongols established in China. Almost all the historical sources of this period, which is far from the field of view of Turkish historiography. Yuan went down to the southern coasts of China and sent *darugas* to rule these places. Therefore, the history of the Yuan Dynasty is the entire Chinese history of that period, and in order to understand this period, it is necessary to know the geography, society, culture and general history of China well. In Turkey, however, there are a few experts on Chinese history. So, this time, knowing Chinese is not enough.

Fourthly, Mongolian studies in Türkiye were mostly conducted for the Ilkhanate period. This situation is not only due to the fact that the Ilkhanids were a part of Türkiye's

history; at the same time, learning Persian, the first main source language required for Ilkhanid studies, and the fact that Persian historical texts are easy to access, compared to languages such as Chinese, also play a role in this. It is possible to access a significant part of the Persian sources from various libraries in Türkiye. Another issue is the abundance of resources in this period of both Turkish and Mongolian history compared to other periods of Mongolian history, thanks to the historical sources from the Seljuks and Ilkhanids.

Fifth, the Golden Horde State, whose center was the Saray, was established in the territories from Irtysh to Idil-Ural. After Batu's death in 1255, relations between the center of the Mongol Empire and the Golden Horde declined. Berke ascended to the throne in 1257, despite Möngke. There were transformations with Berke, who became a Muslim, and in the time of Uzbek Khan, Islam became the state religion. This state, which became Turkic in time, was literally a Turko-Mongol state. From this point of view, Golden Horde studies have great importance in terms of both Turkish and Mongolian history. Moreover, the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Golden Horde and documents related to them are in question. There are many studies on this subject.

Sixth, the Chagatai Khanate ruled mainly in the cities of Turkestan. During the time of Chagatai's grandson Algu, Chu and Yedisu, which belonged to the Golden Horde in the east, Afghanistan in the south and Khwarezm in the west, joined the khanate. The power of the Khanate was mainly concentrated in East Turkestan and Transoxiana. Chagatay Khan Tarmashirin (1326-1334) accepted Islam and took the name Alaeddin. Direct research in Türkiye on the history of this khanate, which lasted until 1370, was very important in terms of city culture and literature, and where the nomadic Mongolian traditions clashed with the culture of the settled inhabitants of Turkestan, started very late in Türkiye.

Seventh, there are studies on the period after the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty in 1368. It was the direct successor of the Great Mongol Empire. It meant that the legacy of the great Mongol Empire was completely dissolved.

Golden Horde State, founded by the Cuci *ulus*, soon became Muslim and Turkish. The Islamized Ilkhanate State, founded by the Hulagu *ulus* in Iran, ended in 1353, and the Chagatay *ulus*, which became Islamized and Turkic, ended in 1370. After the disintegration of the Yuan, the period of small khanates began in the Turkestan area. Relatively small Mongolian khans began to rule. After the Mongol Empire, the most powerful structure established by the Mongols was the Cungar Khanate. Founded in 1634 by the Oirats from the

Western Mongolian tribes, this state was destroyed by China in 1755. In the next period, the western tribes of the Mongols came under the rule of Russia and the eastern tribes of China. In Türkiye, mainly on Mongolian tribes and Cingars, research was done on the post-Yuan Mongols.

Studies giving information on the culture, religion, social life, etc. of the Mongols in Türkiye were mainly carried out in connection with those of the Turks. There are very few studies focusing directly and exclusively on Mongolian culture. There are hardly any cultural studies directly on the Mongols based on field studies.

Turkish historians have also mentioned the Mongols in their work on general Turkish history and in their various research. It is a fact that the history of the Turks is intertwined with the Mongols. For the Mongols, it is inevitable to meet the Turks in terms of both their homeland and national history. As information on Mongolian history in the works of Turkish historians got closer to Anatolia, it seems to have increased through the Mongol Empire, Ilkhanate, Golden Horde, Chagatai and Timur states. Despite this, it will be seen that there is a much larger literature on Turkish-Mongol clan relations, Mongol tribes in the composition of states starting from the Huns until the tenth century, nomadic culture, etc. in sources such as Chinese records from previous periods. On the other hand, even the Mongol invasion alone caused a great transformation in Turkic history; It is obvious that the analyses to be made without properly evaluating such a factor will be incomplete. In addition, the existence of the Mongolian and Turkish tribes with the same name throughout history is also constant.

There has been an interest in and orientation toward Mongolian historical studies in Türkiye since the 19th century. With some exceptions, modern historiography methods, free from ideological motives, started research in the 1940s. While the number of books and articles giving direct or indirect information about Mongolian history from the mid-19th century to 1940 in Türkiye was around 50 in total, from 1940 to 2023 this number is around 480 books, articles, papers, book chapters, and dissertations. This shows that Turkish historiography has reached a certain level in Mongolian historical studies.